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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: WAVE OF DTP ARRESTS DEFLATES HOPES AMONG
KURDS

Classified By: Classified by Adana Principal Officer Eric Green for rea
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This is a joint Consulate Adana/Embassy Ankara cable.

1. (C) SUMMARY and COMMENT: In Diyarbakir, the new judicial
offensive targeting DTP officials has sparked near-universal
outrage among local political and business leaders. The PKK
has suspended its cease-fire offer and violent protests have
been reported in Hakkari and other remote provinces;
Diyarbakir is calm. DTP officials have pledged to limit
their response to civil disobedience to avoid provoking
further violence. Our contacts believe the current operation
is orchestrated by elements within the state that want to
undermine positive momentum on the Kurdish issue that had
been created by President Obama's visit, the recent municipal
elections, a PKK cease-fire declaration and the prospect of a
Kurdish conference in the coming months. Opinions differed
regarding AKP's complicity in targeting DTP leaders, but all
agreed the operations will boost PKK recruitment, strengthen
hard-liners within the Kurdish movement, and make
reconciliation more difficult. The DTP's linkages with the
PKK are hardly a secret. But history has shown that using
only law-enforcement and security measures to counter their
activities has done little to decrease the appeal of Kurdish
nationalism and the current round of arrests is likely to
further undermine trust in the GOT and create more sympathy
for those pursuing violence. After the President's visit and
his comments on the Kurdish issue -- which were universally
welcomed among Kurds -- many are now looking to the U.S. to
moderate GOT behavior. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

2. (C) In a nationwide sweep starting April 14, police have
detained between 250-300 DTP officials (precise figures are
unavailable) whom they accuse of "planning and directing PKK
operations in Turkey." Those detained include three DTP
national vice chairmen and numerous other officials,
including about 50 from the Diyarbakir party branch. DTP
officials expect formal charges to be made in the next month.
Prosecutors contend the suspects' activities have been
monitored for about 18 months and their illegal activities
include encouraging civil disobedience actions, organizing
funeral services for PKK militants, agitating for Kurdish
language rights and collecting illegal donations for the PKK.

The arrests have sparked scattered demonstrations in southeastern Turkey, including a violent protest in Hakkari, which resulted in serious injuries to a 12-year-old protester.

13. (C) Muharrem Ebrey, chairman of the Diyarbakir branch of the Human Rights Association, told us the evidence used to support the arrests is not convincing and that no weapons ("not even a knife") have been uncovered in the searches. He said the suspects' phone calls with Sabri Ok, a former PKK member now based in Europe, are being used as evidence of PKK membership. Sahismail Bedirhanoglu, a local businessman, said those targeted were in fact key intermediaries between the DTP and PKK, but he added that they were not involved in violence. "They were doing politics and what we've been saying all along is that the PKKers should transition to politics. We should be strengthening the DTP at the expense of the PKK but this will do the opposite."

AND THE USUAL CULPRIT: THE DEEP STATE

14. (C) Contacts in Diyarbakir's business and media communities all regard the arrests as a major setback following several positive developments on the Kurdish issue, including the DTP's strong showing in the local elections, President Obama's advocacy of greater human rights and his meeting with DTP leader Ahmet Turk, the PKK's announcement (since rescinded) that it would extend its cease-fire to June 1 and renewed discussion about a Kurdish conference to be organized by Iraqi Kurdish leaders in the coming months to map out further steps on a peace process. Chamber of Commerce President Galip Ensarioglu, like all of our

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contacts, placed the blame squarely on the "deep state" security forces. "The establishment derives its power from violence and every time discussion of developing a civilian constitution comes to the fore, violence increases."

15. (C) Bedirhanoglu said the operation will radicalize the DTP. Our objective has been to move the PKK to non-violence, to make it more like the DTP, but this action will push the DTP towards the PKK. Similarly, Diyarbakir mayor Osman Baydemir told us many of the suspects have served prison sentences for PKK membership, but they were now getting involved in politics. "How can I persuade people to come down from the mountains (i.e. give up weapons) when this is what happens?" Baydemir said he regarded the recent PKK cease-fire as significant, a sign that its members "are not in love with weapons." He said the DTP had asked PKK to extend its cease-fire and it had agreed, but the arrests have caused it to reconsider.

16. (C) On April 21 a Diyarbakir court convicted and sentenced Baydemir for a statement he made in 2007 as Turkey was preparing a cross-border operation against the PKK. Baydemir said he did not want "soldiers or guerrillas" to lose their lives; because he used the word "guerrilla," the court concluded he was "making the propaganda of a terrorist organization." He is appealing the conviction, which called for 10 months in prison. Baydemir believes his conviction is also a deliberate attempt to sabotage the peace process. "I wasn't saying 'long live the guerrillas,' I was speaking out against violence. Who will dare speak out now?"

17. (C) PO told Baydemir that, despite set-backs, the DTP leadership needs to stay on the path of non-violence. During his visit, President Obama had encouraged further reforms to make further progress on the Kurdish issue and had met with DTP leader Ahmet Turk. But the U.S. cannot do anything more for the DTP if its leaders are seen to be provoking or tolerating violence. Baydemir acknowledged that DTP needs to resist being provoked by the arrests and that this is a test of its crisis management skills. Everyone, he added, needs to support the cease-fire.

¶8. (C) In Ankara, DTP deputies organized an April 22 overnight sit-in in Parliament to protest the arrests. DTP MP Sirri Sakik told us that he and 19 DTP colleagues refused to heed Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan, who urged that DTP refrain from the sit-in. Sakik said the sit-in was a peaceful way to draw attention to the "outrageous" wave of arrests. (NOTE: In a separate conversation with the Ambassador April 21, Sakik predicted that the sweeps of arrests would send more young Kurds "into the hills." END NOTE) DTP MP Emine Ayna told reporters that DTP "wanted to show that the state approach that denies the right to express differences is unacceptable." The sit-in occurred without any security incident. On April 23, DTP MPs and party members boycotted National Children's Day celebrations in Ankara and throughout Turkey to further protest the crackdown.

AKP COMPLICITY?

¶9. (C) Business contacts believed the anti-DTP operation was spearheaded by the security and judicial establishments without necessarily getting direction or approval from AKP, whose standing in the region will only suffer more as a result of the arrests. Bedirhanoglu said that AKP does not benefit from these actions; it will lose votes in the region and an uptick in violence will distract attention from the Ergenekon case, which is intended to weaken elements of the security establishment.

¶10. (C) DTP representatives, however, believe AKP is seeking vengeance for its election losses and noted that AKP leaders have claimed DTP's success at the polls resulted from PKK pressure on the voters. Abdullah Demirbas, a DTP sub-mayor in Diyarbakir, noted the AKP leadership has not said anything about the operation and "silence is endorsement." Altan Tan, a writer with excellent contacts inside the AKP hierarchy, also thinks the AKP is profoundly misreading the election by

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believing the PKK somehow achieved the outcome through coercion. He noted the AKP's vote suffered because of its stance on the Kurdish issue and corruption. Tan noted that even a relative of AKP Agriculture Minister Eker lost in his home village -- but not to the DTP. Tan added that AKP leaders may also be miscalculating the anti-DTP operation, falsely believing the security forces can somehow remove PKK elements from the DTP without upsetting the reconciliation process. Tan said some AKP-affiliated writers are spreading information that the arrests are being conducted with information provided by the U.S. and with USG approval.

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